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The Jacobs Report

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IMPROVING THE 'STATE OF THE STATE' IS A 7-POINT PLAN

Before a joint session of the Michigan Legislature last Tuesday evening, Governor Jennifer Granholm outlined a 7-point plan to grow Michigan's economy and create new jobs for Michigan workers.

During her second State of the State Address (broken 38 times by bi-partisan applause), the governor maintained that the focus of her administration will be on retaining manufacturers and attracting new businesses to Michigan. Paramount to these goals is a strategy built upon quality educational opportunities, accessible/affordable health care, 21st century workforce development, 'cool cities' creation, and natural resource protection.

The governor also stressed the importance of civic duty, suggesting that all high school seniors collecting the \$2,500 Merit award [for holding a 3.0 grade point average and doing well on the Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP)] should extend their talents into the community.

"In my dictionary, 'merit' does not only mean one's ability to pass a standardized test," said Governor Granholm. "To be meritorious is something nobler than that."

Press secretaries for House Speaker Rick Johnson (R-LeRoy) and Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Wyoming) said that GOP leadership is open to the idea of adding a 40-hour-a-week community service requirement on to the Merit Scholarship, although some rank-and-file Republicans disagreed.

"A contract has been made with the student and the state and I don't want to tinker or tweak that," said Sen. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton).

Democrats were all for it. "By suggesting changes to the Merit scholarship, the governor puts her own stamp of quality on a program ripe for improvement," said Sen. Gilda Jacobs (D-Huntington Woods).

Matt Resch, spokesperson for House Speaker Johnson, noted that several high schools already make community service a graduation requirement, and that's not a bad thing.

Among the governor's other proposals was a pledge to create a new task force protecting senior citizens from scam artists. She challenged local government bodies, school boards and universities to merge their operations where possible and offered zero-percent loans to engineering and technology students as long as they commit to Michigan's workforce after graduation. Additionally, a plan to offer government-backed health insurance to some small businesses was unveiled as a realistic way to insure the state's 1.5 million uninsured workers—with business, employees and government each picking up a third of a person's health insurance costs. The Michigan Chamber of Commerce said that they support the idea in its chrysalis, although specific details will need to be addressed once they are developed.

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STATE REPUBLICANS BACK MARRIAGE DRIVE

The Michigan Republican Party passed a resolution last week supporting the drive to place the “defense of marriage” constitutional amendment proposal on the 2004 ballot, running the opposite direction of an earlier position taken by Party Chair Betsy DeVos.

The switch comes on the heels of President George W. Bush’s State of Union address last week, in which he pumped discrimination of gays as something state and the federal governments should consider enshrining in constitutions.

The GOP resolution says that many of the nation’s “self-evident” truths, such as the definition of marriage being between one man and one woman, are being called into question, which is causing “grave civic distress.”

Michigan law currently defines marriage in law. But the resolution states that recent local, national and international events, including court rulings recognized gay unions, have demonstrated a need to re-affirm marriage.

“It is inevitable that the definition of marriage will be defined either by a simple majority of Supreme Court Justices or by a simple majority of the eligible voters where and when the definition is eventually called into question,” the resolution states.

The resolution closes by saying that the Republican State Committee supports the right of citizens to vote on legislation that shapes the moral climate in which they and their children shall live.

Sen. Alan Cropsey (R-DeWitt) and Rep. Gary Newell (R-Saranac) have marriage resolution amendments pending.

“Bush has put the dignity and equality of gays and lesbians in the center of the political agenda in the presidential election race,” said Jeffrey Montgomery of the Triangle Foundation, “and has come down squarely on the side of those who would ban civil marriage for gays and lesbians. A similar effort is under way in Michigan.

“This marginal status is not based on any sound public policy, but on a very specific interpretation of a very singular religious belief . . . dividing the American people, appealing to the worst instincts of prejudice and privilege . . . The issue of civil marriage comes down to a disarmingly simple question of integrity; integrity of the historic promise of this nation as one that seeks equality and freedom for all its citizens . . . Bush said a constitutional remedy is needed to counter judicial activism, apparently forgetting that it was spectacular judicial activism that awarded him the presidency in the first place.”

For Mr. Montgomery’s full response, please visit: <http://www.detnews.com/2004/editorial/0401/30/a17-48861.htm>

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY BILL MOVES FORWARD

This week, the Senate Committee on Local, Urban and State Affairs unanimously approved legislation that would create a Michigan Holocaust remembrance day, marking the 1943 resistance of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto.

The proposed date for the remembrance day is the 27th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar, intended to coincide with the 27th day (May 16) in 1943, when Warsaw Jews resisted deportation to Nazi death camps. The date in 2004 would be April 18.

Congress has already established a national Holocaust Remembrance Day, which like the proposed Michigan date is based on the Hebrew calendar day marking the 27th day of resistance.

MICHIGAN QUARTER DEBUTS

The new state quarter, revealed this week during a ceremony in the rotunda of the Capitol, depicts a “textured outline of the State and the Great Lakes system” according to the Mint press release. The Michigan quarters are available now and can be seen at www.usmint.gov and ordered by calling 1-800-USA-MINT.

State Senator Gilda Jacobs represents the 14th Senate District, which includes Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Franklin, Hazel Park, Huntington Woods, Lathrup Village, Oak Park, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak Township, Southfield, and Southfield Township. She is the Minority Vice Chair of the Families & Human Services Committee and the Economic Development, Small Business & Regulatory Reform Committee. She also serves on the Government Operations and Health Policy Committees.

Constituents of the 14th District may contact Senator Jacobs at sengjacobs@senate.michigan.gov or toll-free at 1-888-937-4453.

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